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THE LADDER OF SUCCESS

Mayan Revelation Number 256

1. Believe You Can Succeed

2. Determine Your Goal

3. Get Started

4. Overcome Obstacles

5. Look Up - Not Down

6. Take the Hand that is Offered

7. Enjoy the Heights

Beloved Perfectionist:

As we begin this lesson let us carefully consider the question: What constitutes Success? - What goals are worth striving to attain?

The temptation is always with us to equate Success with reaching the top financially, or socially. We think one person is successful when he is elected to public office. We think another is successful when his book becomes a best-seller.

Of a certain young man his colleagues said, "He has it made!" They misunderstood what Success in its highest form is, for although at twenty-seven their friend was a vice-president, living in an elaborate property in suburbia, his consuming desire was to become the company's president, to own a larger house, and to belong to the "best" club, instead of holding his membership in the second-best.

While friends said of him, "He has it made!" that young man would never so evaluate his own position. He is too impatient to reach the "top". He feels frustrated. Already he is conditioning his mind so that, although he is building up both his bank account and his prestige, it is doubtful if he ever will find deep enjoyment and satisfaction in living.

Success, in its highest form, is not equivalent to arriving anywhere. Much of it comes from satisfactions we can enjoy along the way. It is not a reward at the end of Life's journey; it is something we can claim day by day.

As a student of Mayanry you have spent years in faithful study. You are still constantly striving for self-improvement. What do you hope to gain? Happiness? Security? Contentment? The knowledge that you have done your best?

This Lesson presents seven techniques which will help you to achieve these goals. They are seven rungs on the Ladder of Success:

1. Believe you can succeed.
2. Determine your Goal.
3. Get Started
4. Overcome obstacles.
5. Look up - not down.
6. Take the hand that is offered.
7. Enjoy the heights.

Think of your Instructor as climbing beside you. If we are serious about the study of this Lesson, and put forth our best effort, we can know the kind of Success which comes to all who live triumphantly. Pause and pray with me:

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PRAYER

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God, I thank Thee that Thy judgment will not be made according to human standards. Help me to recognize Thy many gifts to me, and to visualize the noble person I can become. Save me from discouragement; and steady me as I climb upward. Amen.



BELIEVE YOU CAN SUCCEED

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Let us begin by admitting that what is Success for our neighbors may not be Success for us. The statement: "All men are created free and equal," has been grossly over-emphasized. One person is endowed with a perfect body; another with a frail, or imperfect body. One has a brilliant mind; another only normal intelligence - or perhaps less. One man or woman has the privilege of growing up in a Christian home; another has known little of the security which loving care brings.

If we have defective vision, let us not waste time complaining. Helen Keller had no eyesight after the age of three, yet she won Success in the eyes of the world, as well as great spiritual victories. If arthritis brings pain to our limbs, let us not whine. One man - Lord Cavanaugh - although he was born without legs, became a famous member of the British Parliament; while Glenn Cunningham, whom some looked upon as a crippled boy, first dreamed that he might become a great runner, and then by persistent training overcame his infirmity. He ran faster than men who had never struggled to overcome lameness. He even broke the world's mile record.

Here is a lesson for us. Whatever our handicap, let it serve as a spur to supreme effort. Then, although we may never succeed as brother Bill, or friend Jane, is succeeding, we can achieve certain goals which they will not even attempt to reach.

You may have less vitality than other members of your family, but you may have more patience. You may have no talent for speaking, but you may possess a great talent for listening. You may not be able to teach physics or mathematics, but may be able, by precept and example, to give wise instruction in the Science of Living.

Think of yourself as an important person. Know you are needed. Evaluate your ability and decide to use all of it in the very best way possible. Accept your handicaps, and seek to turn them into assets.

God made you, as He made me. He is calling each of us to do our best with the material we have. With His help we can find joy and satisfaction every day of our lives. This is possible only when we refuse to let our limitations halt our progress. If we exert both mind and will we can climb to new spiritual heights.

DETERMINE YOUR GOAL

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Happiness comes not by chasing pleasure, but by finding a purpose big enough to inspire and control our lives. We are born with the capacity to achieve Success - but often we fail to reach our goals because we attempt what is a worthy purpose for someone else, but is not the kind of achievement for which we are created.

Success comes from self-realization. This means that it is not the same for any two people. To some degree the standard varies for each individual. So be realistic. Set goals which are right for you.

Recall the Truth lifted up by the parable of the talents, recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. Jesus tells the story of a master who, before leaving for a far country, gave ten talents into the keeping of one servant, to another five talents, and to another two talents; while to the last servant he gave only one talent. When the master returned he called for an accounting. The three who had used their gifts wisely received praise. The man who had been entrusted with only two talents, but had invested both of them, received as much praise as the men who had more to invest, and who had gained more.

The important thing - according to this parable - is that each one is to use all that has been given to him. The man who had only one talent, and hid it, received great condemnation.

Whenever we think we have been short-changed in our allotment of money, or talents, or opportunity, we are tempted to use this as an excuse for not using what we have. If we yield to this temptation we condemn ourselves. We limit our progress. Often we make it impossible to develop a daily consciousness of personal adequacy. This feeling is necessary for Success.

Your contribution in the great orchestra of the universe may be as small as that of a piccolo player, but whenever you keep your life in tune, and play your part well, you know you are contributing to the world's symphony. This brings you a feeling of inner peace. It promotes a sense of freedom from tension, of release from frustration. This is a satisfaction worth attaining. Keep it in your thinking as you set the goals for your life.

Heartache comes when one makes a mistake in his aim. I think of a beautiful girl who has a lovely voice and a radiant personality. Some misguided music critic encouraged her to train to become an opera singer. Although the girl sings sweetly she doesn't have a voice big enough to be acceptable at the Metropolitan. After years of study the girl has discovered her limitations, and she feels frustrated and defeated.

How much better it would have been if she had sought to use her talent to sing in church services and to give others vocal lessons. Fortunately it is not too late for her to gain lasting values for her life.

Nor is it too late for you to thoughtfully determine what should be your goal. Don't put it too low; and don't put it so high that you can never attain it, for that would cause you to lose valuable time and effort.

Give consideration to these questions as you seek to determine the purposes for your life:

- What are my talents, and how can they be used?
- How can I provide for the basic needs of myself and my family?
- How can I gain the peace which comes from knowing that I am needed and loved?
- How can I contribute to the comfort and the happiness of others?



GET STARTED

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It is one thing to decide what we want to do, and quite another to begin doing it. The tendency to procrastinate plagues all of us.

Many people would like to write a book. Some have the ability; but they have never outlined the first chapter, for it seems difficult to get started. The author of a best-seller said, "My novel came more from hard work than from inspiration." A teacher of composition gave his students this advice: "The most important asset of an author is not genius, but a self-starter. If you want to be a writer set out several pages of clean paper, sit down at the typewriter, and begin."

You climb the first rung on the Ladder of Success when you believe you can succeed. You climb the second rung as you determine your goal. The next step is to begin immediately to do the things which you have decided you should do - the things which will bring you satisfaction.

This is true as you work at your business or profession. It is equally true if you would establish desirable habits or wipe out those which hinder you. These steps are essential if you would achieve Success in your marriage, and in your home life.

If you ever want to own the house in which you live, you must make the first down-payment. If you want that house to become a home, begin today the practices which will work this transformation: a little more appreciation for the one you love; a few minutes of your complete attention when your boy or girl enters the room; and extra courtesy and friendliness for each person who walks through your doorway.

Begin today to do the things you want to do.

Begin today to be the self you want to be.

OVERCOME OBSTACLES

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Booker T. Washington said: "Success is to be measured not so much by the position one has reached in life, as by the obstacles he has overcome while trying to succeed."

How true this is! Yet sometimes we envy the person who has an easy life, who has plenty of money, and plenty of leisure. We are tempted to measure Success by the size of a person's car, or house, or bank account. A candid camera would often reveal that behind these outward signs of prosperity many lives are empty, many hearts are filled with heartache and loneliness.

The only Success which is worth a lifetime of effort is the contentment which comes from being wanted and loved, plus the satisfaction of knowing that you have made some contribution to the comfort and happiness of others. This calls for personal sacrifice. It is attained only by overcoming each obstacle which threatens your progress.

For many of us the first obstacle we face is a false standard of values. I think of the church elder who decided that to "keep up with the Jones" he must have a summer home in the mountains. When spring came he went there every weekend, and worked long hours, not even taking time for Sunday worship. Whenever he met his pastor and friends he apologized for his neglect. One week-end he overtaxed his strength and was stricken with a heart attack. Many of the man's friends were certain that feelings of guilt had destroyed much of the joy which he had anticipated when he acquired a second home. This man had slipped in his climb toward Success, even as he was adding to his worldly possessions.

All about us we see unhappy, frustrated individuals who are tense, nervous, and worn. They are frantically working to get more and more material things, yet they seldom stop to enjoy what they already have.

Avoid this type of madness. Poverty does not assure spiritual Success, nor does wealth prevent it; but it is foolish to sacrifice time and strength for gadgets and luxuries which you don't need and which you will not truly enjoy. Don't wait until tomorrow to claim the priceless gifts of beauty, love, and peace of mind.

James Russell Lowell wrote:

"For cap and bells our lives we pay,
Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking.
'Tis heaven alone that is given away,
'Tis only God may be had for the asking."

Try to find a balance between laboring and resting, between striving and relaxing. The thrill of Success comes, in part, as a reward for honest effort.

Constructive work usually brings some degree of satisfaction. Occasionally, however, the work we must do appears to be a stumbling-block - tripping us as we strive to reach happiness. This happens when we are bored by the task which we do every day. It happens when our work is unsuited to our ability.

If you are restless and unhappy in your daily occupation you may be wise to search for a job better suited to your talents, something you will be able to do well, something you will enjoy doing. Of course, this is not always possible. If that is so, and you would climb the Ladder of Success, then you must learn to find joy where you are.

A man who had little formal education, and limited opportunity, was the engineer of a subway train. He aspired to culture; but instead of bemoaning the fact that he must spend his days underground, he used his spare moments to study Greek. Although he became proficient in the language, no advance in position or social standing ever came his way. What did he gain? A new window for his mind and soul.

If your work is dull, or monotonous, as you labor with your hands you can use your intellect to acquire new skills, or new sources of delight. If some physical weakness is your obstacle - some weakness which it is impossible to remove - your only hope is to live above it.

Many men and women have turned their handicaps into stepping-stones. You can too. This will require, however, not only determination, but sustained effort. Victory will not come as a dramatic climax, but in small conquests day by day. This is true whether you are trying to surmount an infirmity like arthritis, or a character trait like self-consciousness. Success comes by gaining a little every day.



LOOK UP - NOT DOWN

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When we have climbed part way toward the Success which is a composite of satisfaction and contentment, we should be eager to climb higher. Ahead are rewards sufficient to make the most difficult struggle seem worthwhile.

Yet we still face the temptation to look toward the worldly satisfactions. The delights of materialism can seem alluring. One slip may cause us to whisper, "I can never make it to the top." False pride can stop our progress at the half-way mark.

The temptation to let material pleasures crowd out soul-satisfactions will rapidly diminish if you and I spend some time each week with others who live according to the highest standards they know. For this reason we should join a group, or seek the companionship of friends, whose aspirations are similar to our own. Your Instructor considers this very important.

Even when we have been encouraged by friends and companions, sometimes our feet will slip a bit. This threatens to make us lose our grip. Then we must concentrate upon our successes, not upon our failures. Remember that every person experiences a few setbacks. Even Lincoln was defeated more than once.

So why waste your energy fretting over some error? Call to mind your victories; and keep climbing.

Although it is possible that failure may tempt you to cease your struggle upward, you face an even greater temptation. It is the tendency to rest and take it easy. After you have made progress on the path to the heights, the thought comes, "I've done well enough." Then you must again look up at your goal and affirm: "I will not rest until I have done my best."

The novelist Thomas Wolfe said: "If a man has a talent and cannot use it, he has failed. If he has a talent and uses only half of it, he has partly failed. If he has a talent and learns somehow to use the whole of it, he has gloriously succeeded, and has won a satisfaction and a triumph few men ever know."

Beloved Perfector, you have a talent. Perhaps you know what it is, and are using some of it. If so, you are already part way up the Ladder of Success. Now seek ways to use more of your ability. As you do this you will mount higher.

Day by day continue to keep your eyes focused upon your ideal. When ascending physical heights, if you would keep from falling you must look up. This is true in the spiritual realm, also.



TAKE THE HAND THAT IS OFFERED

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Several years ago a friend and I climbed a high mountain. When we were above the tree line a cloud covered the peak, making it impossible for us to see for more than ten or twelve feet. Fortunately members of a hiking club had carefully marked the trail by putting blood-red crosses on the rocks. These were our only guide, and we knew that if we missed only one of these we would be hopelessly lost. Yet in the fog it was not possible to see from one cross to the next. I kept my feet on one marker while my friend searched for the succeeding one. When he had located it he called, "Come on up." Progressing in this way, we safely reached the summit.

On your climb toward Success you, also, are dependent upon others. Those who have gone before you have marked the trail. It would be foolhardy to ignore the guideposts.

Usually you will find that when the path is steep, and the going is difficult, relatives and friends will offer to carry part of your load. It is a mistake to try to climb alone, or to foolishly attempt to bear your burdens alone.

You will recall that Timothy was homesick and downhearted. In such moments a letter from Paul was like a blood transfusion. It brought the assurance that someone cared what happened to him. (Paul addressed Timothy as "My beloved child.") The letter reminded the young man of his heritage, of his partnership in the faith, and of his gifts from God. "For God gave us not the spirit of fear, but of courage, and of love, and of a sound mind."

With this encouragement Timothy was able to continue the work he had begun. Part of his renewed strength came from human support. Part came from accepting divine help.

We need to remember that while human assistance is usually available, God's help is never failing. Our Father's hand is always extended to you and to me. Whenever we stumble we can be sure that: "Underneath are the Everlasting Arms."



ENJOY THE HEIGHTS

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Happiness will come to you as you feel a sense of achievement. When one climbs a mountain he finds the air is clearer at the summit. The high places give a feeling of exultation. Something like this will be your experience as you climb the Ladder of Success.

You will have a right to feel this awareness of joyous satisfaction. In fact, if you fail to grasp it completely this failure will pull you downward.

Robert Louis Stevenson said, "Your first duty is to be happy." If these sound like the words of one who was pursuing pleasure, remember that the man who wrote them spent his life battling immobility and pain. Some of his greatest novels were written from a wheel-chair. Others were dictated when he was so weak that he could hardly speak above a whisper. Many of his immortal poems for children were composed in this way. Among them are the lines:-

"The world is so full of a number of things
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings."

Stevenson believed it was his duty to be happy for he was aware that, though he was handicapped by a weak body, he had eyes to see the beauty of the world and to discover knowledge; and he had a mind which he could use even when confined to his bed. He believed it was his duty to be happy because only when his soul was singing could he bring happiness to those about him.

Take satisfaction in your achievements. Revel in each advance toward self-control. Feel a sense of joy in each contribution you make to the lives of others. Become absorbed in living at your best. Find your greatest reward in climbing upward and in helping others toward a richer, fuller life.

Never give way to boredom, or cynicism, or gloom. If your environment is not what you desire, look for some good in it. Strive not only to improve your own conditions, but to bring happiness to those about you. Your opportunities may be limited. This brings the challenge to do the best you can with what you have. If necessary, make much out of the meager amount which you have been given.

The Ladder of Success is not only for the gifted and the strong. It is for men and women in all walks of life.

If you are poor in material goods, you can become rich in the coin of the spirit. If you are weak in body, you can become strong in mind and soul. If you are growing older, you can keep young at heart. If you are handicapped physically, you can become skilled in personal relationships. Success is yours as you

sincerely seek it, and ardently strive to attain it.



AFFIRMATION

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With God's help I can achieve Spiritual Success.
Today I will shake off the lethargy or doubt
which tends to hold me back. Throughout every
hour I will strive to be my best self, and to
encourage each person whose life touches mine.

May this lesson be blessed unto you is the heart-felt prayer of your instructor.